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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9525
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA
OSD FOR POPOVICH

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

1. (SBU) INITIAL LABOR PROTESTS AGAINST GOVERNMENT AUSTERITY
MEASURES FIZZLE:

Only 300 members of the Croatian Trade Union Association (HUS) and the Croatian Pensioners Party (HSU) turned out in the eastern city of Vinkovci for the first in a series of planned protests on September 9. The union's main complaint is the crisis tax introduced by the government. The protest in Vinkovci is the first of seven protests organized by HUS throughout Croatia. Other Croatian labor unions, including the largest labor unions as well as the student union, are not supporting the HUS protests. In a meeting September 3, Ana Knezevic, President of the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Croatia (SSSH) told EconOff of her dismay that HUS planned to move forward with the protests on its own. She decried the lack of unity among Croatian labor unions, which in her opinion enables the HDZ government to undermine the unions and claim that the unions' demands do not enjoy broad popular support. (NOTE: SSSH is the largest of five major Croatian labor unions with approximately 225,000 members. HUS has approximately 35,000 members.) (TBullock/DMatijas)

2. (U) CROATIAN ATLANTIC COUNCIL HOLDS CONFERENCE ON FUTURE
OF NATO AND ISAF:

The Croatian Atlantic Council held a conference on NATO's new Strategic Concept September 3-6 in Slano, on the southern Dalmatian coast. The conference gathered academics, government officials and Atlantic Council representatives from around SE Europe. At the panel on Afghanistan, both Croatian presenters, MoD State Secretary Simunovic and prominent parliamentarian Kresimir Cosic, spoke forcefully in favor of Croatia's continued deployment to ISAF, and for continued international engagement in Afghanistan in general.

Both stressed the security threats that Afghanistan could pose to the entire international community if it was abandoned. Other topics discussed included NATO's potential role in energy security and counter-terrorism, as well as the future of NATO enlargement and relations with Russia. Embassy's Pol/Econ Counselor participated as a speaker.

(RHoltzapple)

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